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A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE PEACE OF GOD.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—PHIL. IV. 7.

This is only one of the expressions found abundantly in the New Testament, which describe the Christian's experience in the most attractive language, and contribute to it elements which are not practically to be found in the ordinary Christian life. Such language as this stirs the imagination. It attracts our desire vehemently. But it seldom is answered in any development or experience in practical life.

If by *peace* is meant simply a negation of painful excitement, almost all dull and phlegmatic natures have that; but surely, this is not what is meant. Is there no peace for acute vitality? Is there no peace for strong and active natures? Is there no peace for men and women through whose bosoms roll tides of passionate emotion? Is peace only a gentle fatigue, or soul-sleep, after a stormy life? Is it ashes when the flame is burned out? Or, is there a quality of peace which goes along with energy; with overflowing fullness of emotion; with acute sensibility; with great energy and power? Is disturbance the result of not knowing how to use our superior feeling and faculty? And is there a divine influence and a divine schooling that shall so teach men how to use all their nobler powers that they shall come into a perfect harmony, and cease to be exhausting or rasping, and become peaceful? This latter, without doubt.

If that be so, what becomes of the practical experience of Christian men, and even of very good Christian men? How many of you can claim that this experience has ever been yours, and that you have had that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding?"

Joy is another thing. That may spring from single faculties, and from very imperfect ones. It belongs to a lower state. There is a joy; for that is the term by which we signify constitutional pleasure —arising from the exercise of any one of our appetites or passions. He that eats pleasant food has joy of taste. He that listens to pleasant sounds has joy of hearing. He that looks upon pleasant things has joy of sight. He that has a lower form of affection has joy. Joy is

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merely the pleasure which any faculty derives from its constitutional action; and it may exist in very great rudeness and very great imperfection.

Men are so little addicted to the finer shades of religious experience, that frequently they do not discriminate between mere excitement and joy, and almost never between peace and joy, although peace is transcendently higher than anything that we are accustomed to understand by *joy*.

We shall best compass our end in explaining this matter, by taking a view of the conditions of Christian experience as they exist in God's providence in this life, and as they are recognized in the New Testament.

It is clearly taught that there is a very long gradation in Christian experience—that no man becomes a whole Christian all at once, by a miracle of the Holy Ghost. No man is born into the kingdom of God full-fledged, full-songed, victorious. We are born into God's kingdom little children. We have to go through a process of development and education in religious things, as little children in this natural life are obliged to go through successive stages of education and development. Christians are, therefore, widely separated from each other in quantity and quality of moral excellence and of experience. We find in the New Testament the distinct recognition of *babes*. Some are children. Some always will be. We find the apostle making express provision for the *weak*, as if they were to remain weak. Some men are always in struggle. Some have alternations of peace and disturbance. Some have a continuous flow of peace and tranquil joy.

Now, are these different degrees or kinds of experience mere matters of chance? No. There is a regular process or gradation, beginning with moral excitement and turbulence at the earlier period of Christian life, and progressing toward peace, as one passes through the educatory stages, and comes into the higher element of a true spiritual life.

The struggle of life is that struggle which is eminent as we are overcoming the wisdom of the body, and the impulses of the body, and substituting in their stead the wisdom of the spirit and the control of the spirit, under the divine influence.

The practical mistake which men are liable to commit, therefore, is the ascription to every part of Christian life of the experiences which are properly predicated of particular parts of it. No man can have perfect peace at the beginning; that is, unless his whole previous life has been in some sense a religious and Christian discipline, so that the work which ordinarily takes place in the heart in conversion has by God's grace been in part, as it were, carried on before—for I believe that

there is a great deal of Christian life which is provided for beforehand in Christian communities.

If a man were just born into school, his teacher would smile at him if, while he was yet floundering in his Greek verbs and roots, he should say, despondingly, "Oh, sir! where is that pleasure of learning that you talked to me about?" We do not generally find the pleasures of learning when we are studying the grammar. What would you think of a little child that should expect the amenities and delights of literature when learning the alphabet. That is not the point of literary culture where pleasure comes in.

And the peace which comes from Christian life does not come with the alphabet. That is not the point at which to look for it. It belongs to Christian experience, but it belongs to a later stage. It is one of the signs of ripeness, but not of blossoming. That *peace which passes all understanding* is the highest and the most secret stage of experience. Once reached, and the soul is in the land of Beulah; and from the delectable mountain henceforth it will look over upon the celestial city; and at the hush of evening it will hear, or will think it hears, those voices of the blest which rise in endless warbles over the city of God, and of which, I sometimes think, all sweet earthly sounds are only the echoes, or, as it were, wandering and lost sounds which have dropped down through the tumult of this lower sphere, confusedly, and yet have not quite lost their sweetness.

Let us, then, look at some of the qualities of the soul's highest and latest experiences of Christian life. Let us look, in other words, into that secret life which we cannot declare; which is unspeakable, and yet is a reality; toward which every one of us should aim; into which some of us have by this time begun to come; and into which all may more or less come.

1. As by discipline, by devotion, by a holy volition, one rises into the higher realm of experiences, it will be found that his pleasures are less and less derived from the ordinary and material sources of life. We live so much in the body, and by it, that it is not strange that in the beginning the experiences of our life should be external; that our earlier experiences should be so largely colored by physical circumstances. The buoyancy of life, the joy of the eye, and the ear, and the hand, the sportive enjoyments and animal life of childhood, are perhaps the most beautiful instances of mere material enjoyments.

I do not undervalue God's goodness as shown to us through the flesh because I say that this is the lowest form, and that as we rise higher we shall put it into a relatively different position. A growing sense of the superiority of the invisible world and qualtiies; the rising up in the soul of a distinction between thoughts and things, between

qualities and substances; and the gradual learning to derive pleasure, not from the abundance of the *things* which we possess, but from the abundance of the *moral elements* which we possess—this is one of the early and unequivocal signs of a truly spiritual development.

To reach this state, the imagination must of course have been cultivated, so as vividly to keep the invisible in suggestion. No man that is without imagination can rise to the highest forms of Christian life, because we have to forget the visible; and by the power of some faculty in us, we are to live as in the presence of the unseen. That is the very function of the imagination; and I think those parents wrong their children who in early life bring them up to be so practical and matter-of-fact that they deny all culture of the imagination. Childhood is full of this quality, and it is not to be restrained, although it is to be educated and directed. But children, although they are not likely, in our day, to be bewitched by fairy tales, nor by fables, nor by fictions or stories, are being prepared by these very imaginary disciplines which they receive in their early literature, for that higher function of the imagination which becomes, in alliance with moral qualities, what the Bible means by *faith*. For, "faith is the evidence of things not seen." Faith is that power of the mind by which it makes real to itself something that is not sensuous and material. It is the power of conceiving by the mind things that are invisible to the body. As a man grows in Christian life, and grows in that part of Christian life which is to make him depend more upon invisible than on visible things, this element must come to his help—the power of imagination, by which we conceive and make things real that are but conceptions—that have no visible form.

Men are less dependent for happiness, in this condition, upon wealth; upon certain positions in society; upon power and victory; upon rivalry, and its successes. In other words, as men learn to derive more of their enjoyment from their own inward selves, and from the higher forms of spiritual association, they are not so dependent upon their outward conditions as they were before for happiness. They can be happier, perhaps, with outward things, in a fitting way; but they can be happy without them; and they learn more and more to be happy without them. But this does not imply any contempt for these things.

When a man first begins to write, his book is ruled, because he does not know how. He runs his letters along on the penciled line, which he afterward rubs out—or tries to. And when men first begin in life, God, as it were, rules their path by physical things; but as they learn to live by something higher, the lines are rubbed out, or taken away, and they learn to live without any such basis for their letters.

It is true that society has in it all sorts of rude and undeveloped

people. Society requires wealth. It requires that there should be ten thousand things for the senses. And men live sensuously, and live right while they are living sensuously. But it is a lower form of life that they are living. And just in proportion as men rise higher and higher in the Christian development, they are less and less dependent upon their physical conditions for their enjoyment. They do not revile them. It is not the old cynical spirit. It is not deriding the body and the flesh. It is simply the recognition that material experiences and enjoyments are wise and beneficial for the lower forms of life, but that every man ought, by their very use, to have risen so high as to open for himself yet higher ones, that are not dependent upon the mutations of physical things.

2. But—parodoxical as it may seem—when one has reached this state in which he begins to have a power of enjoyment and a power of peace, independent of his relationship, he has a more exquisite enjoyment of material things than he ever had before. No man is prepared to have anything in the Christian sense of the term, who is not prepared to lose it and to do without it. The moment a man can say, "Not my will, but thine be done," it is safe to trust him with his own will; but just so long as a man is not willing to submit to a higher will, it is not safe to trust him with his own. In other words, the higher spiritual states of the mind are more exquisitely susceptible to pleasures of rightful physical joy, than are the physical attributes themselves by which we first comprehend those joys. Let a man look upon this material world, and all its resources of pleasure, with a purely material eye, and he cannot derive from it such enjoyment as a man who looks at it through the spiritual and poetic elements. These higher faculties are susceptible of deriving a pleasure from the material globe which the lower and purely sensuous faculties cannot get out of it.

Society, and all its innocent gayeties, which belong to us, are more pleasurable when we have learned to get along without them, than they were when they were indispensable to us. There are persons here that know this is true. There are those present who remember how in their early access to society, their purturbed, glowing, unruled, youthful impulses, shot out with a certain wild, rank impunity, and would not be controlled. But you have outlived that. You have come to that state in which society is not so indispensable to you. And yet, you are able to bear witness that though now you can get along without it, when it pleases the providence of God to put you into it, you are conscious that you are deriving from it a pleasure that you did not have when you were made well-nigh insane by it. Psychologically interpreted it is this: That when we first come into society, and its pleasures,

we come into them by our lower faculties; whereas, when we have gone on, and developed a higher range of life, if we return to society, with our higher faculties developed, while we are freer, and while we dominate our social conditions, they are capable of expressing from society a wine that is purer and more joyous than that which comes from the earlier and lower sentient enjoyment. So that a man has this anomoly in his own experience: that he cares less for society, and is made a great deal happier by it than he used to be.

Property is not enjoyed in the eagerness of getting it, and in the early stages of it, as it is when one has risen above it, and is willing to lose it. There are those here who will understand this, too: that when the first wild fling of adventure was in them; when they were, so to speak, explorers, without experience; when they felt the eagerness, the intense gratification, of the first success, and the joy of ever-opening ambition by which they foresaw what they were to be by-and by, they were not so happy as afterwards, when they had acquired wealth, and had proved it, and were more temperate and calm. If they are somewhat disappointed in the power of wealth to make them happy, there is yet an element of satisfaction that remains. They now look upon it in the light of the higher feelings and the better reason, and see what it can, and what it cannot do. And they will bear testimony that though they value it less, it makes them more happy. Just in proportion as they let go of it; in proportion as they compel their lower instincts not to idolize it; in proportion as they look down upon it as rational beings, from a higher moral standpoint—just in that proportion it is able to give them a more exquisite enjoyment. So men are not fit to have property till they are ripe enough not to care whether they have it or not—that is, until they cease to care intensely for it.

It is the same with friendship. So long as we are idolators in the temple of love, we are unfit to worship. When we have gone so far up that we have made God supreme, and have put in his hands our dearest friends, and have been able to say in regard to that which is nearest to us, "Thy will be done," it may cost us a struggle to say it, but we shall find that they are more to us than they were before. When the mother has lifted her child up, and has at last said to God, "Take it; thy will be done," God gives it back to her, and it is safe for her to hold it now. She loves it more than she ever did, because she is conscious that she loves it with the higher nature. It is a finer love that she experiences. It transcends anything that she ever knew before.

Oh! in how many places has Christian faith triumphed! How many mothers have stood struggling by the side of their children that were dying, or seemed about to die, and gained victories! When they

come to that state in which they are able to give them up, they are conscious that they take more joy in them than they did before.

And as it is with our friendship, so it is with every point by which we touch life. When we first begin to touch life, we touch it by the lower and intermediate faculties. And it is a lower and coarser joy which we experience under such circumstances. But when we have developed ourselves to the higher spiritual condition, we come to the same things by another class of faculties. We are not bound by them; we are not in bondage to them; we are not judged by them, as before; and yet, we derive from them more exquisite pleasure. But they are more allied to peace, as we shall see, further on.

3. This higher condition of spiritual growth brings the soul into a more intense realization of the personality of God. And here we have another paradox. A true spiritual life is full of paradoxes. Peace, interpreted by one set of faculties, and on one side, looks one way, and interpreted by another set of faculties, and on the other side, looks another way. And both are true. At the same time that the higher spiritual life gives us a sense of the personality of God, it gives a universality to him which fills all nature, and which associates the divine presence with every phenomenon of the world. The first stage of the knowledge of God is, as it were, to gather him in from immensity.

When the mind first attempts to pray, when it first attempts to lift itself up to a conception of God, it complains that he is so vast, and so vague, and so universally diffused, that the heart cannot conceive, nor the hand, as it were, touch him. So that the very first step of development in the direction of God is, if I may so say, to condense into personalty these vague and immense attributes—till we begin to have a distinct sense of personal character.

But no sooner do we begin to have this distinct sense of personal character, than there begins a second process—the process of distribution again, by which that which has become personal begins to be pantheistic: not pantheistic in the bad philosophic sense, but pantheistic in the true and Christian sense. The first stage of growth toward God is in the direction of personality of character and being; and just as soon as we begin to feel that, just so soon we begin to feel, also, that he is the God of the whole earth, and to see his footsteps, and his handmarks, and the tokens of his genius, everywhere.

First, the child learns to love his father as a person in the household; but as he grows older he begins to see his father in the handwriting that lies on the secretary; he sees him in the chair that stands in the corner; in the hat and coat that hang on the nail; in the cane; in the garden; all through the house, and around about it—everywhere that his father has thought and shown his taste, and performed his

labor. The child learns to see his father wherever he goes, in whatever his father's being is associated with. He sees him in every element which is the outworking of his thought and skill and power. He sees his whole personality.

I remember very well, being waked up, on dreamy moonlit nights, by the whippoorwill. Its wild, strange song trumpeted through the air, and I was seized with I know not what inspiration. My soul exhaled, and I quivered with a kind of pleasant terror. I would fain have called out, but that I did not dare to hear my own voice in the silence. The light of the moon, streaming through the window and filling the room, brought tears, half of pleasure and half of terror, which ran down my cheeks. Presently I heard my father hem, in the adjoining room; and then it was all peace. Just that simplest inarticulate sound, that brought quick through my fancy a sense of my father's presence, dissipated all terror. I was myself again in an instant. From this least hint and sign of personality, how quick the whole person came!

We must needs have a clear, *clear* sense of God real and personal, with an intellect, with moral feelings, with a will, with affections, with a nature like our own—for we cannot understand anything outside of our own nature, absolutely.

When once we have attained that end, the next higher development of the mind is to give it diffusion, so that the heavens, now, at last, begin to declare the glory of a God, and the earth to show his handiwork to us, and we see him in the morning and evening, in every season, in the tree, and grass, and brook, and rock, and flower, in the brute creation, and in all the developments of human society. Everywhere, and always, there is this sense of God universally present, until at last we come to that stage of blessed development in which we are no longer dependent upon times and seasons, or upon places of worship, as at the beginning we were. All days are Sunday, all hours are hours of worship, and all places are temples, to us. But this is the later stage of development, and is not to be presumed upon by neophytes, beginners, early disciples. As the result of culture and habit, and the use of spiritual influences, we come into a state in which, day and night, we are never without a sense of our Father's presence. We live under the same roof with him. He fulfills to us the promise, "I will come in and abide with you."

When, therefore, one class of men in society seeing how disputes come from doctrines, say, "Doctrines are good for nothing," I say, "They *are* good for something." When men say, "Ecclesiastical governments are good for nothing," I say, "They *are* good for something." When men say, "Creeds and regulations are good for noth-

ing," I say, "They *are* good for something." They are all good for the lower stages of development. And as society is going up continuously, there is always a new stratum of men who require that things shall be regulated by times, and seasons, and governments, and that there shall be rules, and principles, and formulas of belief, as well as forms and methods of devotion. But as these are for the earlier stages of development, a man's business is to get rid of them as soon as possible, and leave them behind, by so growing as at last not to heed them.

When a man first reads, he reads with his finger—"A–n–d, and; t–h–a–t, that;" and he ought to read so when he cannot read any better. But ought he to read so all his life long?

There are many persons that write prayers, and forms of public worship, and say that it helps. I say that it helps, too. It is just like reading when you have to spell out the words. But if it helps, it ought to help you so that pretty soon you will not need it. You ought not to go on forever and forever like a child that always spells his words, and never learns to read. You should "read out loud and clear," as the teachers used to say.

All these forms of doctrine, organization and service, are real in their function; they are indispensable as a part of the course of education; but they are none the less signs of a lower education, and of a lower, undeveloped life; and it is none the less true that, as men rise into a higher knowledge of God, and into a better use of their higher moral nature, these things are to be laid aside. As the child lays aside the chair or the walking stool, by which its first steps have been helped, so we are to lay aside those helps which were designed to aid us in the early stages of our Christian life. We are, as the apostle directs, to leave first principles, and the laying on of hands, and go on unto perfection. There is no quarrel between these things and the higher condition of the soul, any more than there is between childhood and manhood. Both are true. Men need these things at certain stages, and do not need them at certain other stages.

4. With this process of development will always come another—one through which we develop into the higher moral nature by the discipline of God's providence. By the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and by the realization in us of the power of truth as it is in Christ Jesus, we shall find that we are going in one uniform, invariable direction into it. You never will see a person going into the higher moral state through the gate of any sharp, conscious, malign feeling, which it utterly negates. The malign feelings are mephitic gas to the higher nature. Show me, therefore, a saint, that is truly a saint, and I will show you a saint that is gently, cheerfully, mildly, sweetly a saint. In other words, as fruit is very sour when it is green, so are Christians; and as

fruit when it ripens is sweet, so are Christians. All true religious growth is toward sweetness. Mildness and sweetness are the characteristics of ripeness. If, therefore, you find that one is more stringent, more sharp, more consciously greedy, as he grows in Christian life, you may be sure that he took the wrong shoot. He is not growing the right way.

There are a great many men who are like one of my roses. I bought a *Gloire de Dijon*. It was said to be one of the few ever-blooming roses. It was grafted on a manetti stalk—a kind of dog-rose, a rampant and enormous grower, and a very good stalk to graft fine roses on. I planted it. It throve the first part of the summer, and the last part of the summer it grew with great vigor; and I quite gloried, when the next spring came, in my *Gloire de Dijon*. It had wood enough to make twenty such roses as these finer varieties usually have; and I was in the amplitude of triumph. I said, "My soil suits it exactly in this climate; and I will write an article for the *Monthly Gardener*, and tell what luck I have had with it." So I waited, and waited, and waited till it blossomed; and behold! it was one of those worthless, quarter-of-a-dollar, single-blossomed roses. And when I came to examine it, I found that it was grafted, and that there was a little bit of a graft down near the ground, and that it was the manetti sprout that had grown to such a prodigious size.

Now, I have seen a great many people converted, in whom the conversion did not grow, but the old nature did. A man may be a Christian, you know, in a spot; and growth in that spot should be such as to keep down nature. The whole power of the root should be thrown into the new scion, which should make the stem and the top. If, therefore, you see a man that is sharp, and full of thorns, you may be sure that it is a mannetti stalk that is growing, and not a *Gloire de Dijon*—nor a *Gloire de Jerusalem*, either! It is nature, and not grace. For just as sure as God is love, so sure they that are his children, and that are growing according to the new nature in Christ Jesus, are growing toward gentleness and sweetness, and easy-to-be-entreatedness. They are full of love, and the fruits of love. An eminent development in grace is an eminent development toward gentleness and sweetness and agreeableness.

You cannot help loving a man that is a Christian in the later stages. If you *try*, you cannot help it. The ear might as well say that it does not love music, or the eye that it does not love color, or the tongue that it does not love sweet flavors, as the moral consciousness of men say that it does not love that which is intrinsically sweet and harmonious and beautiful, when it sees it worked out in the highest and best forms.

5. The progress of true Christian development will be accompanied with a process of disinterestedness, lowliness, non-exactingness, unboastingness, childlikeness, and simplicity. I do not say that you are to set these things before you, and aim at them as a mark. I say that the natural unfolding of a man that is growing will bring him to them. There will be a consciousness of unworth.

I never like to see a man too morbid about his sins. Neither do I like to see a man who does not think he has any sins. The true unfolding of grace in the soul fills one, to be sure, with a sense of imperfection, of unwrought nature, and of sinfulness; but if God has been dwelling with a man for a score of years, it is not for him to get up and speak of himself as having never had such a royal schoolmaster in his bosom. It is no compliment to divine grace for a man who has been forty years in the church to get up and say, "I feel as though I was a vile and filthy rag." He *is* a vile and filthy rag to say that!

Paul said, "Be ye followers of me. Not as though I had already attained. This one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In other words, "As far as I am a follower of Christ, be ye followers of me." He gloried that in many things he did begin to represent Christ, and present a model from which men low down could see God's perfection better than from its higher spiritual amplitude and beauty.

A man is not to be morbidly, and certainly not conventionally, a slanderer of himself; for if he is truly a child of God there will be a thousand things in which he will know it and feel it, and in which other men will know it and feel it. Nevertheless, just as soon as a man begins to know it too much, and feel it too much, he spoils it all. Just as soon as you see a man put on that indescribable look of conscious elevation, as much as to say, "Thank God that I am not as other men are;" as soon as a man assumes that pitying and patronizing holiness which you sometimes see in people who talk to you, and thank God that they have gained such eminence, and are sorry that you have not; as soon as a man looks down on those around about him with a compassionate concern, as much as to say, "I do not blame you for not being as good as I am—for I am extraordinarily good; but I pity you that you are not—as soon as a man becomes so conscious of his superiority as to manifest that consciousness in ways like these, he destroys that beauty of the Christian life which he might otherwise exhibit. He is given to spiritual conceit; and no matter how much you discuss it, no matter how much English language you rub over it, you cannot make anything else of it. Some men seem to think that if they use

enough language, that will change moral qualities. They seem to think that if they say that they are humble often enough, people will think that they are humble. But people are not deceived in any such way.

When a man is growing in grace, he will have his faults and his follies; but, after all, you will find that besides growing in the direction of light and sweetness, he will always be growing in the direction of simplicity, and childlikeness, and unfeigned humility. He will know where he is strong; and if you dispute him he will fight you, perhaps; but if you let him alone he will also know where he is weak, and will confess his weakness, and mourn over it before God. But this simplicity, this childlikeness, this humility, is one of the characteristics of the later stages of true development in Christian life.

6. This higher inward life will be marked by the conversion of the voluntary states of mind into involuntary states, in greater and greater proportion. We hear a great deal about the will, and about voluntariness in the service of God, and about the want of moral quality in involuntary states. The old theologians especially used to discuss this subject. My father, and all those that were around about him did. They meant the right thing when they were discussing it; but their discussion has produced a secondary effect—that of impressing men's minds with the feeling that a man does not do a thing perfectly unless he does it on purpose, and knows that he is doing it. I take the opposite ground, and say that a man does nothing perfectly till he does it without knowing that he does it. It is a universal principle that no man does a thing well till he has converted it from purposed doing to unconscious doing—in other words, till he does it by habit, spontaneously, rather than on purpose.

Children are almost always graceful; but the moment they come to be neither children nor men, hovering half way between, in the land of awkwardness, then they think, "What shall I do with my hands when I go into the parlor?" And the moment they begin to think, they do not know how to do anything. They think, "How shall I stand?" or "How shall I speak?" And the moment they think about it, and do it on purpose, how instinctively they do it in an embarrassed and awkward manner! But after they have become wonted to society, they never think about these things. Then they fall back and resume their childlike grace and propriety of conduct.

If every time a man does a sum, he has to do it by the most painful process of reasoning, as I do (for if I add six and seven, I have to analyze the seven, and say, "Six and six are twelve, and one is thirteen,") he performs the work very imperfectly. But how is it with an accountant in a bank? Some men run up a whole page of columns together.

That is a very different thing from making a study of it. Hand them a roll of bills, and they will discover whether they are genuine or not, as fast as they can run them over. You and I will take a roll of bills and examine them for a long time, and finally conclude that they are good, or that they are bad, as the case may be; but put them into the hands of a clerk who is accustomed to handling money, and see how he will throw them out, one after another, into twenty piles, keeping in his mind the location of the banks—whether they are Eastern or Western; the denomination; and whether the bills are good or counterfeit. If any of them are counterfeit he knows it without looking at them. He *feels* it.

An old gentleman, who died not a great while ago, who used to attend church here, and who was a gold-teller in many of the banks, his business being to count gold, told me he could take piles and piles of gold on a counter, and throw them out just as fast as he could make his hand go, and detect any counterfeit pieces that there might be among them. He knew by the feeling whether they were full weight, whether they were genuine metal, and whether they were split and filled with some base material. He could discover all the adulerations that rogues were accustomed to practice on coins, by instinct. He was educated to it. It was not because he thought about doing it that he could do it; he did it without volition.

As long as a man thinks what he is going to say, he cannot be a public speaker. His speaking must get ahead of him, and he must go on behind it, and find out what he has said, as it were. That is the sensation that he has. A man that is a poet is to be caught by inspiration, and carried on. And no man is more surprised than the man that has done these things, to think that he has done them. A man that is working in the higher range is like a speaking-trumpet, that never speaks, but is spoken through. That is the feeling. The artist that stops and looks at his pallet, and says, "What shall I put there? I do not know," has mistaken his vocation. A true artist puts the right thing there, and then says, "I wonder why I did it?" He is first led to do it, and then he analyzes and finds out the reason.

This is one of the most important elements of moral education. No grace that you have to tug and pull at is a grace that you yet possess. If a man wants to be humble, and thinks about being humble, and tries to be humble, and says, "What shall I do to make myself humble?" that is better than nothing; but he is on the lowest form in the school. He is an abecedarian. When a man has learned to be humble, he is humble spontaneously, and before he knows it. If a man is really meek, his meekness must not be on purpose. A man's meekness must leap out at once. He must have had such practice that it will

come without any volition on his part. And so of generosity; so of forgiveness; so of that deep, unfolding love which shall spring up from generous impulses, and from forbearance, and from goodness, or from the nature of God, which overflows heaven, and deluges the universe itself. The feeling must be in you so strong, so full, so continuous, that it takes care of itself, and gushes out perpetually in every direction. And you are in this secret, higher religious state, just in proportion as you are involuntarily good, in distinction from being purposely and voluntarily good.

I meant to speak of the development in the later period of life of the element of beauty, and to show how closely it stands connected with moral experience. I believe that all physical beauty is but the faint outworking of the higher fountain of beauty which has essential beauty of idea and moral quality. This is one of the unfailing developments of the true higher life in its later stages.

The sun may be more powerful at mid-day, when the light is white and intense, and the heat pervades all things; but, after all, for beauty, give me the sun when it has travelled through the day, and has fallen so low that it begins to look aslant through the trees, and cast long shadows, checkering the earth, and filling the heavens, and staining the clouds, and surrounding itself with magnificent glory. Then the sun is most beautiful.

And the most beautiful thing that lives on this earth is not the child in the cradle, sweet as it is. It is not ample enough. It has not had history enough. It is all prophecy. Let me see one who has wrought through life; let me see a great nature that has gone through sorrows, through fire, through the flood, through the thunder of battle, ripening, sweetening, enlarging, and growing finer and finer, and gentler and gentler, that fineness and gentleness being the result of great strength and great knowledge accumulated through a long life—let me see such an one stand at the end of life, as the sun stands on a summer afternoon, just before it goes down. Is there anything on earth so beautiful as a rich, ripe, large, glowing and glorious Christian heart? No, nothing.

My dear brethren, it is toward this final stage, these higher developments, that every one of us should set his whole Christian life. Many of you are young. You cannot come into such experiences except through intermediate ones. Do not be discouraged if you fail to have the higher joy, the higher light, the higher disclosures. Never forget, however, that you are on your way toward them.

If I had a little child that I wished to inspire with a love of horticulture, I might take him into Cushing's garden near Boston, or into any of the green-houses and hot-houses in New York, just to raise his

ideal of what art can do in perfecting flowers. I might take him in just to show him some of the most perfectly reared roses, and geraniums, and cinerarias, or any of the other fine hot-house flowers. And I might give him a little patch of ground to cultivate and raise flowers on. But I would say to him, "You must not expect that you are going to raise such flowers as those at first. You have everything to learn." I would encourage him, however, summer by summer, as his experience increased, to improve his flowers, and make them finer and finer. And by and by, after years had ripened his little powers, and his skill of hand, he might begin to vie, in some single flowers, with those which he saw in the green-houses. But not for years afterwards could he take a green-house, and fill its shelves all around so that every single month of the year should have its floral triumph by reason of his skill.

You are all gardeners, and are just planting seeds. Your ambition is toward this later stage of development. And never forget that it is not enough for you just to have been born again. It is not enough for you to have set your faces toward Jerusalem. It is not enough for you to overcome the common sins, and to attain the common moralities. A great growth, a noble manhood, lies before you. There is a magnificent experience possible to every one of you. It is not possible in equal degrees to all; but in some degree it is possible to every one of you. There is not a soul here that may not reach this later and more glorious disclosure of divine grace. And if in the providence of God some of you seem to yourselves to be hindered, debarred; if some of you seem to have been blown off the coast, by the dreary winds; if some of you, as it were, are storm-beaten, and have lost your mast, and roll as if to founder in the sea, do not be discouraged. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

I have known fathers who, while bringing their sons up to riches, were seemingly cruel to them, and pushed them off. As the lioness, when she would wean her cubs, pushes them off, and teaches them to be lions of the desert; so a wise father pushes off his boy from servile dependence, and makes him take care of himself, and almost laughs to see him wallowing in trouble, and says to himself, "I am sorry; but, after all, that is the way to make a man of him—and I want to make a man of him." And it is the faith of the thing which is coming after the sorrow that makes the father rejoice, and seem so cruel to his young cubs. And so our Heavenly Father says, "Whom I love I chasten."

When you are disappointed, when you are vexed, when you are hedged in, when you are thwarted, when you are seemingly abandoned, remember, son of God, heir of heaven, that you are being prepared for this higher life. You need courage; and that is the way to have it.

You need patience; and that is the way to achieve it. You need perseverence, and that is the way to develop it. You need faith, and you never will have it unless you are brought to circumstances in which you are bound to act by the invisible rather than by the visible. You need those Christian graces of which the Bible speaks, and of which the pulpit preaches; and practical life, with its various vicissitudes, is God's school in which you are to acquire these things.

Do not be discouraged, then, nor cast down. When you are bestead, remember that God is dealing with you as a good schoolmaster. Though he be a severe one, you will thank him for his severity by-and-by.

Old men, tell this to young men. Tell them that you are more thankful to God for the memory of past sufferings, than for the memory of past joys. The laughter of youth—what did that do to you? The gayities of your early days—what did they do to you? They were like gleams of the summer sun which, falling upon the broken surface of water, flash beauty. They did nothing. They reared nothing. They ripened nothing. It was those hard grinding periods and passages of experience that brought you out at last, it may be with a slender victory, but yet undefeated. Those are the things that you look back upon and say, "It was a hard time, but it did me good." Did you good? Yes, it did you good in just that point where no man can afford to be poor—in your manhood. It saved you just where if you are bankrupt, you are bankrupt forever and forever—in your heart and conscience.

Therefore, when God is dealing with you in the cradle and in the crib, in the chest and in the till, in ambitions and in strifes, do not accuse him. Do not cry out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Remember that to those who are *exercised thereby*, God shows his love and his fatherhood. Bow yourselves meekly to the chastisements of God, and see to it, not that you can get away from trouble, but that you can rise above trouble, by being made better by it.

Very soon, *very soon*, dear Christian brethren, we shall come together where you and I will know the truth of what I have been preaching this morning.

When a man is once across the sea, and in this free land, it matters not whether he came in a stately steamship, or in a fine packet-ship, sailing many more days, or in the poorest tub that ever weathered the ocean. On the way over it makes a good deal of difference; but when he is once here, it does not matter.

Now, we are all sailing across the sea of life, in different vessels. Some of them leak, some of them are slow, some of them are very fine and stately, some of them have cruel captains, and some of them have

good captains; but when once we get our feet on the shore of the New Jerusalem, we shall not care what took us over there, nor what our fear was on the way.

See to it, then, that you reach the heavenly city. See to it that God is your God. See to it that you have a child's right. Of all the trumpets that you can lift up at the heavenly gate, there is but one that will let you in. Blow the trumpet, if you will, of your own good deeds, and there is not an angel in all the heaven that will know the sound. Let pride speak, or speak through your vanity, and you will fail to summon a messenger to the heavenly gate. But blow the trumpet of love, and its first lisping sound will quickly roll back the bolt, and lift the latch, and open the heavenly gate, and you shall come in with a child's welcome, and find your Father's house, and your heart's delight. Learn this love, and rise to this home, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. *Amen.*

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We desire to render thee thanks, our heavenly Father, for all the mercies which thou hast extended to us—mercies of the seasons, and mercies of thy providence in life for the household; for all the processes of life by which we have learned to think and to act; by which we have been disciplined to patience, to foresight, to prudence, and to patient endeavor under discouragement. We thank thee for all the instruction of the sanctuary. We thank thee that we understand the meaning of things that are done without; that we are made to perceive how all things are working together in thy providence for spiritual results. We thank thee, above all, for that ministration of the Holy Ghost, that inward working of divine light and fire, by which we have been able to lift ourselves above the knowledge of the senses, and of material things. We thank thee that we are inspired even beyond the reach of the following thought and reason and that there are sacred impressions which thou dost work upon us, which abide, which we believe and know to be true, which lift us above all things that are low and base and gnoble, and which drive our whole life upward toward thine. We thank thee for this watchful guardianship, and this loving care, and that thou hast ministered it to so many of us consciously; and to so many more of us, though we are unconscious of it None of us know all thy soverign care, and all the particulars of thy infinite and unceasing love. Nor shall we know it till we behold thee as thou art, and see with something of thine omniscience. But we rejoice in what we know, and desire to derive therefrom arguments of faith and trust for all the time to come. Since all things shall work together for good to them that love thee, why should we give way to murmuring? Why should we be sodden with anxiety? Why should we look out darkly from to-day into to-morrow? May we behold all the time that is yet to come as under thy Fatherly care. Grant that we may have faith to trust thee; to lean our outward welfare, and also our whole spiritual life, upon thee. We thank thee that thou art preparing us for resurrection into a nobler sphere. We desire to be more and more anxious for that other condition and for those ulterior riches. We desire not to be unmindful of the state that we are now in, and of the things which belong to this life. But in them we wish that we might see prophecies of thy better kingdom, and of our nobler character when we shall be kings and priests unto God. Grant that the other light may break

through, and that we may discern it in this mortal sphere. O let us hear the sounds that are uttered in the heavenly land. Let us feel wafted upon us the influences that there roll as the atmosphere rolls here.

O bring to us a sense of God's infinite love. Bring to us a sense of that divine ellowship in which all noble souls move together. Bring to us a sense of that harmony and of the grandeur of that friendship and love which they have who have passed through the flood and through the fire, and are prepared, spirits of just men made per fect, to enter upon the glory of the heavenly sphere. And may we long for that man hood which is in Christ Jesus. May we lie upon the bosom of thy promises, waiting for their fulfillment in us.

Grant, we beseech of thee, that we may understand that all thy dealing with us rom day to day, is a part of this work; and may we be workers together with God, working out our salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Grant thy blessing to rest upon all the families of this church and society. Grant that all that are accustomed to sit here from Sabbath to Sabbath may have the blessing of the sanctuary abiding upon them. Hence may they bear sacred fire to kindle the flame of devotion at home. Hence may they bear light. Here may they derive peace Here may the storehouse of divine bounty feed them. Here may they clothe themselves with raiment from above. Here, every Sabbath day, may thy servants be able to equip themselves and put on the whole armor of God, that they may go forth more truthful more gentle, more gracious, more loving, more faithful, more earnest, more full of wisdom that belongs to this life, and more full of that higher wisdom which belongs to the life to come.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt be near to those who are sick, and to all who are in suffering, and to all who are under the cloud from any cause. And grant, O Lord our God! that they may discern thy presence very near to them. If there are any tha mourn the loss of dearly beloved ones. wilt thou comfort them. Wilt thou uphold their hearts, and give to them such comforting thoughts that their souls shall know that the Lord thinks of them, and that he sympathizes with them.

Prepare us for any events that lie undisclosed to view. May we be found in every emergency equal to the exigency. May we have such strength ministered from on high that nothing shall surprise us, and nothing shall overcome us. And may we write as our daily experience, even in the midst of tumult and trouble, Cast down but not destroyed.

So may we live by thy strength, so in thy strength may we be able through weak ness to die triumphantly, and so by thy strength may we rise gloriously in the resurrec tion morning to be forever with the Lord.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be the praise evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, wilt thou bless the word which has been spoken . Wilt thou grant tha we may be made wiser by thy truth, and by thy providence, and by thy grace through the Holy Ghost. Grant that we may understand thee. And understanding thee, may we understand thy daily work with us—the whole meaning of life ,and all the processes by which it is unfolded and made into a perfect manhood in Christ Jesus.

Wilt thou go with us when we shall have sung again to thy praise. Go with us through life. Be with us in dying. Let us be with thee in immortality. And unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, shall be praises, evermore. *Amen.*

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The appearance of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher's 'Life of Jesus, the Christ,' is awaited with eager interest, mingled with considerable curiosity. Among our eminent divines, there is probably none who would cause such dissimilar conceptions of the character of his work, if it should be announced that he was preparing a history of the Saviour. Mr. Beecher's independence of judgment and catholicity of thought, except him from the general rule of estimation. Of the style of the narrative, there is, of course, no question. But it is in regard to the tone, the spirit, the theology, of the work that speculation exists. In a degree, this natural desire to know something of the nature of the volume may now be satisfied. J. B. Ford & Co., of New York, Mr. Beecher's publishers, have issued a chapter of the work in a separate form. It is entitled 'The Overture of Angels,' and is printed on heavy calendered paper, tinted, with plain carmine border, gilt edges, and handsome gilt cover. It records the events clustering about the birth of the Son of God. The Lives of Christ which have been issued may be counted by hundreds, and there are scores of them which have attained wide reputation. But in none of them, we believe, are the wondrous scenes of the nativity so charmingly narrated. Mr. Beecher's imagination is of the recreative order. It is controlled by the facts. It does not leap over all bounds of revelation and history, and rush the reader into the presence of creations of his own mere fancy. He rather dwells upon the original, like an artist, in reproducing a faded picture, until again all the features, in their beauty or their sharpness, are brought out with exact fidelity. And, indeed, there is little need to do more. The angelic visitations to Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, and the Shepherds, with the other uncommon events connected with the conception and birth of the holy child, need no additions. All that is requisite, is an exercise of the vivid and disciplined imagery of the historian—not the overflowing and uncontrolled delineation of the novelist. But picturesque beauty of style, freshness of discussion and originality of thought, are expected in anything which emanates from Beecher. Rhythmical, flowing, easy, delightful as is the volume, we have indications of higher value. If we rightly draw the inference from two or three paragraphs in the 'Overture of the Angels,' evangelical truth will find a most powerful defender in 'The Life of Jesus, the Christ.' A chapter of scepticism is punctured with a single sharp sentence. A volume of argument is overthrown with a paragraph. We shall not quote the demonstration of this, but leave the reader to find it, as he will in the references to miracles, to the slaying of the children on the coast of Bethlehem, and the existence and ministration of angels, with other minor instances. These paragraphs are but intimations of the power which is in reserve, and which will be brought to bear in more decisive cases.

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